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A Program for Participation in Government
by
College and University Social Science Faculties

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During the present period of national defense preparation, it is necessary to utilize all of our resources as effectively as we are able. This will be a crisis of long duration in all probability and it is necessary to plan in terms of such an extended period of time.

Among those resources which we have are carefully thought out proposals which men and women in different fields of endeavor have, and which, if properly channeled, could, in many cases, be used advantageously in formulating policy. The problem has been that in the past individuals with such suggestions to make, unless they were actually in government service, very often had no means whereby they could bring these proposals to the attention of those responsible persons in a position to make practical application of them.

This has been true of college and university social science personnel as well as people engaged in other activities. In individual cases, the problem of the void has been mitigated to a certain degree through personal contacts, particularly of those individuals on university campuses who at some previous time, especially during World War II, served in government.

But even in a number of these instances, the channel of personal contact has been only partially successful, because the individuals on the government end very often were not in the exact position where they could make use of that particular item or did not themselves have contact with someone who was. Further, this left it up to the personal discretion of this person as to whom the suggestion would be of use, and there was no careful judgment passed on its circulation; it was very likely that many people who might have made use of it never were informed of its existence, even after it had made its way into government.

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Because of this situation, it is thought that a system could be established that would perform the function that is now lacking: that of a direct channel of communication between persons on university and college staffs, and the government agencies that might make practical application of their contributions. To do this effectively, organization - at least of a minimal nature - is necessary at both the university and government ends.

It is proposed that a start be made through: 1) a brief survey of a number of colleges and universities to discover to what degree they have considered the problem and what, if any, provisions have been made thus far for collecting, categorizing, and transmitting carefully thought out proposals by members of their staffs in the social sciences to government agencies and 2) discussion with officials in a number of government agencies of the usefulness of such a project from their standpoint, obtaining from them suggestions as to how it could be of the greatest value to them.

One of the purposes of this program would be to allow faculties to remain at their teaching posts while, at the same time, making some contribution in their respective fields directly to government. Over a long period of time, it is hoped that such a program of specific channeling of carefully considered suggestions would produce results of definite benefit to the country, benefit that is now lost through the lack of a means of transmission and a direction of effort towards definite goals.

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The program itself would include two elements: 1) the systematizing of careful proposals from individuals serving on college and university staffs in the social sciences to be passed on to the appropriate government agencies; and 2) the acceptance of particular problems and projects upon which certain government agencies desire to have work done at universities. This latter part could approach, if not become, a form of contract research in the social sciences.

The system could develop and operate in the following manner:

1. One, or possibly a group of colleges would be selected to operate as pilot plants in order to start on a small scale and work the system out efficiently before expanding it to include a large number of colleges and universities.

2. The individual responsible for the operation of the system at this particular college would explain to the social science faculty the purpose, scope and details of the project.

3. The faculty would be provided with forms, previously agreed upon with government agencies, on which to write up in as great detail as they desired, their proposals for a project, line of action, policy or particular activity and these would then be submitted to the liaison official at the particular institution.

4. These forms would then be processed for distribution to the proper government agency and passed on to government, a second copy being filed and kept at the university or college.

5. At the same time, one or more government agencies might present to the college or university, through the liaison official, special problems which they would like to have considered by certain members of the faculty into whose area of work they fit.

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6. As these suggestions were received by officials in government agencies, they would select from among them those which they considered to be of use and, very probably, would wish to consult with the individuals who had presented them. This could take the form of a proposal for further work on the same subject, a further systematic analysis of the problem and its proposed solution, a consultation between the individual in the government agency working on that special subject and the faculty member making the suggestion, or a consultation among several men in government and outside working in that particular area. If what was needed was long-term research, this could be worked out on a contract basis.

7. While the full scope of the program could be tested only in part through its introduction in one group of universities or colleges, some idea of how it could be utilized most effectively could be gained. It would then be necessary to continue to increase the number of participating institutions. As the number was enlarged, the coordinating function would become greater, but its usefulness would be much expanded because individuals at different institutions directing their efforts towards the same or similar problems could then combine their resources and participate jointly in research and in consultation with representatives of government agencies concerned with those particular projects.